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AND THERE WAS A
TRAIN FULL OF CHILDREN



by Anita Fellner

Pastels and Paintings by Gene Fellner

Special thanks to Aggie Tuden

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My mother came to Fischach when she was 14. She lived with her Uncle Isador and Aunt Mathilde. Uncle Isador traded cattle. I don't know why they traded cattle or how they traded cattle but the big cattle market was in Landsberg and they would go there every Monday morning to buy and sell. I don't remember more than ten cows in the stable at any one time.

And Uncle Isador and Aunt Mathilde had a horse, and the horse knew me — it was a very clever horse. And I would walk into the yard and up a small hill and the horse would start nickering. And I came prepared with sugar in my pocket. And I would go into the stable and feed the horse before I would go and say hello to Aunt Mathilde.

My mother could milk and I could milk too. And my mother always told the story of how she would run into the stable to milk just enough for the afternoon coffee — fresh from the cow. But I don't think the milk was a big business. They would have two big cans and they would fill them every morning and evening and take them to the dairy. And the dairy was set up with two big wooden tubs. Over them was a tray with cheese-cloth into which you poured the milk to sift it and then you had something like a big yardstick which you would stick into the milk to measure how much you brought. And the amount was put into a little book and they would write in how much milk you brought and, I suppose at the end of every month, we got paid. One had no refrigeration so one went every day or every other day.

After Uncle Isadore died and they didn't have any cows anymore, my mother would send me to buy milk. It was only a few blocks but to me it seemed like a long distance. And I would complain because I had to pass one farmyard where there were very aggressive geese and another one where there was a really nasty barking dog. So I didn't particularly like it. And my mother would give me very strict orders that I was not to take milk from certain people because they didn't scald their cans properly so the milk would get sour, or their cattle were not healthy. But it was so embarrassing for me because I was a little girl and how could I say "I'm not allowed to take your milk" and I tried to explain that to my mother but she had no patience with any of that at all. So going for milk was never a very happy experience.



My family in the early days

We made our own cottage cheese but we bought butter and I didn't like to buy it at the dairy because it was always rancid. I could not tolerate rancid butter. So I had, at a very early age, refused to get the butter from there. My mother was so irritated, "Princess on the pea," she would say because I would make such a fuss about it. But she allowed me to buy the butter at Zott's, the local grocer, because Zott had a refrigerator and his butter was never rancid. It was the one chore which I absolutely observed meticulously.

My father's father came to Fischach from Poland when he was 3 or 4. I guess he came with his parents and siblings and his mother—my grandmother, who was called Sabine and who wore a sheitel. They had a big house in the middle of the village.

My father's father was in the business of tobacco, cigars, and wines. The customers were mainly hotels. My father traveled in the alps to country inns and the like. He went from hotel to hotel and restaurant to restaurant to take orders. I especially remember the mountain circuit because sometimes my mother went with him and then I had to stay with my grand-parents and I didn't like that at all — my grandmother was a very stupid lady. I would count the days till my parents came back.

On Sunday afternoons when a fancy new bottle of wine came in, the whole family would get together in the living room and open the bottle and everyone would taste — even the children. And we were all asked for our opinion.

The only hard liquor I remember was "gold water," little flecks of gold would float in it and it was like plum brandy. The rest were wines and liqueurs, that kind of thing, - and malaga which came in this bottle in a basket. We would get it sometimes as a treat in the afternoon. My cousin Rudy and I would run into the store and cry "we're thirsty, we're thirsty" and we would get a little glass of malaga which is what we came for. We were six years old and we were drinking this sweet potent wine — and it was delicious.

My mother and father



When my grandfather retired, they built this little kiosk- a one room store painted yellow- in the front yard. And in it there were jars of hard candies, teas, coffees, cigarettes, cigars and wines. And there was a counter which had one of those lids that you could open so you could go through to the other side. Of course we children would crawl under it all the time. And on the other side there was a little stove to keep the store warm. And somebody would sit in the store all day. My Aunt Mina sat in there by the hour manicuring her nails and working on her trousseau which she never used. Sometimes my



grandfather was there and some-times my mother would sit there, summer and winter. When the big pogrom happened in '38 or '37, in front of the kiosk stood the SS man in his big black uniform with the gun on his hip making sure that nobody would walk into the store.

My mother and father got married in 1919 right after the war. She

was 28. When they got married they lived on the upstairs floor in the house of Aunt Clothilde. We had a cat when we lived there. It was a black cat called KitzBullerbeiss. I still have a scar on the first finger of my left hand where Kitz bit me. One day Kitz was not with us anymore but our cleaning lady arrived with black fur on her coat and I am quite sure that was Kitz.

My mother and Clothilde quarreled and, when my mother decided we could not stand living with her any longer, she decided to move. But it was a village and there were no apartments and we were not about to buy a house. So being a very creative lady she went to one of the three local inns and she said, 'You have all these rooms on your second floor and you never have them occupied because how often do traveling salesmen come? Why don't you divide off the last four rooms and make an apartment out of it.'. And the owner laughed and said, "what a ridiculous idea" and my mother said, "what's so ridiculous about it? You would have four rooms constantly occupied and all you would have to do is put in a kitchen sink and a stove and make a separation -a proper entrance door." And he said, "alright." And we moved in there and there were four beautiful large sunny rooms. And through the kitchen door you walked out onto a huge balcony which overhung the next yard which had large trees. So it was like living outdoors.

My father and mother were very happy together. When my father was travelling, I would sleep in his bed. They had big twin beds next to each other—no space in the middle—and I loved sleeping in his bed because there was a bedside table and there was a nice reading light and I was always dying to sleep in the bed on the off-chance that my father was coming home and then they would shove me in the middle of the bed with one of them on either side of me. But my mother would never let me sleep in the bed when she even faintly suspected that he was coming. They were very happy together. I don't remember them ever quarreling.

Walter was my mother's favorite but there was no question that I was the apple of my father's eye, that I could do no wrong, and I cannot remember that he was ever mad at me. We talked a lot. Sometimes when he went on little trips, like day trips to the neighborhood inns and pubs (some of which were only accessible on foot) he would take me with him. We would walk two or three



AND SOMETIMES I WENT TO SLEEP ON THE TRAIN / PLEASE I WAS SO TIRED - BUT IT WAS THE BEST I COULD DO

miles to get to a pub and then we would stop and have bread and cheese and a beer or some-thing like that and then maybe we would walk some more. And we would go off in the morning and if we could we would come home by train. And sometimes I went to sleep on the train because I was so tired. But it was the biggest treat for me.

My father carried peanuts in his pocket and on Saturday, when he took the day off and we would go walking, sometimes-just for pleasure,-I would put my hand into his jacket pocket and pick out a peanut and peel it. And I always remember him putting his hand over mine in the pocket.

My father liked gardening quite a bit. On the balcony of the house he had made big window boxes—and he was inordinately proud of the cucumbers he grew. And one year he brought back seedlings of hanging carnations. He had window boxes made for the front of the house and planted the carnations in them and for all the years that I remember we had glorious red carnations which grew year after year. And he never went out without a carnation in his buttonhole.

So in a way it was a quiet comfortable life which revolved around the Jewish calendar. My father had already been born in Fischach, his father had spent almost all his life there, there were Jews in Fischach who had been there before him. And so we lived very happily until, oh, 1935 — until the Nuremberg laws made it absolutely impossible for us because the local Nazi honcho lived at the other end of the hall from us and eventually it became impossible for him to have this Jewish family living there. So we had to move. But until then we lived very happily there

I came to reading rather late. I suppose I must have been in the second grade before I really started to read. It took me a little while to get moving. But by the time I was thirteen, I had read all the children's literature that was available. I had read Robinson Crusoe, Around the World in 80 days, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and there were a whole lot of German things of that nature. Of course we didn't have a public library in Fischach. So Jews went to each others homes because the Jews, all of them, had a cupboard full of books and we would borrow from each other. Aunt Kathe belonged to the lending library in Augsburg, and from the lending library she would always pass them on to my mother.



My father liked gardening

Walter and I were typical older brother and younger sister. I looked up to him and he protected me. He teased me unmercifully. I had pigtails and he constantly pulled my hair. He laughed at me all the time but he also looked after me. By the time he was eighteen he was very slight, very studious, and he played no sports. Like the typical studious Jewish kid.

When Walter started high school in Augsburg he knew nothing except to read and write. It's a miracle he survived. We all learned how to read and write but that's all we learned. Walter was 10 years old then. He came out of this village school where you spent the first hour of every day doing Hebrew and where you were off every Jewish holiday and where you had two months summer vacation. When he got to the high school, obviously things were very hard for him. He got Latin, he got complicated math, and German grammar.

He had to leave every morning at five in order to be in school at eight. The train in the morning went at five-thirty and he sometimes didn't get home until six in the evening. They told the story of when the railroad first came to the village they wanted to make Fischach an express stop. "No way," said the elders because "such fast trains would frighten the cattle and the houses would fall in." And so forevermore, Fischach was off the line. No one ever got over the idiocy of it.

So when Walter came home from school at night he came with piles of homework. And my mother sat down every night when he came home from school and he gave her the assignment and he did it and she did it. Then they compared notes. She did everything with him, Not for him but with him. She did all the math with him. He would tell her how it was done or she would read the book to find out how it was done and then they would both do it. And if they came up with different results they would both do it again. She did the Latin with him. When he had to collect the stuff for the botanical course she would go walking with him. He certainly was the child of her heart. She was not going to have him do anything but well. In a class of fifty he was always seventh or eighth. But after three years he had to leave because he was a Jew. We were running out of money because Jews weren't allowed to have trading licenses anymore. It was Uncle Sigmund, who was



AND she would do everything with him and he would do it with her

My mother and Walter did everything together

my grandfather's younger brother, who paid for Walter's last year at the high school.

In those days Uncle Sigmund lived with Aunt Paula who was a gentile. They knew they would have to break up or get married before the Nuremberg laws went into effect. Aunt Paula said she was going to commit suicide if they were to break up. She was a young woman, thirty years younger than he was. Her father was a banker in Stuttgart and Sigmund married her and she became Jewish. She didn't turn Jewish officially, but in the eyes of the law she had from then on become Jewish. And he was the only one in the family who died a natural death because when things got bad, they moved to her parents' house and lived there together. He died in his bed. He was the only one of the adults close to us who did. But Aunt Paula survived badly. When the Russians moved in she became literally penniless because everything she had was in non-negotiable bonds. The only money that was left was the money that was left to my parents and Cousin Rudi's parents in Sigmund's will which was carried out. By that time both Walter and I were doing quite well and we sent to Aunt Paula what we had inherited. Aunt Paula lived for part of her life on that. She became slightly deranged and was in a terrible state because the Jewish authorities wouldn't help her because she wasn't Jewish and the German authorities wouldn't have anything to do with her because she was. So she was really in poverty.

If my mother could have moved we would have left as soon as the authorities closed the Jewish schools. But my father had been president of the Jewish community for many years and he kept saying "I can't leave all these people. What am I going to do with my old parents?" There was the old Grandmother who was then well into her 70s, and Aunt Mina, and there was Uncle Isadore and Aunt Erna and Rolf, their little boy in Munich. My father had a great sense of responsibility to his fellow man. He was just as anxious that other people should be safe as that we should be safe. He could not leave everybody behind. My mother was ready to leave, but she wouldn't do it without him. She could have gone to England as a cook. They could have gotten out as a domestic couple in due course. She urged him to all the time. But where would you go? We had nobody anywhere. The U.S. had a terrible quota system though there were plenty of Americans who saw what hap-



Uncle Sigmund and Aunt Paula

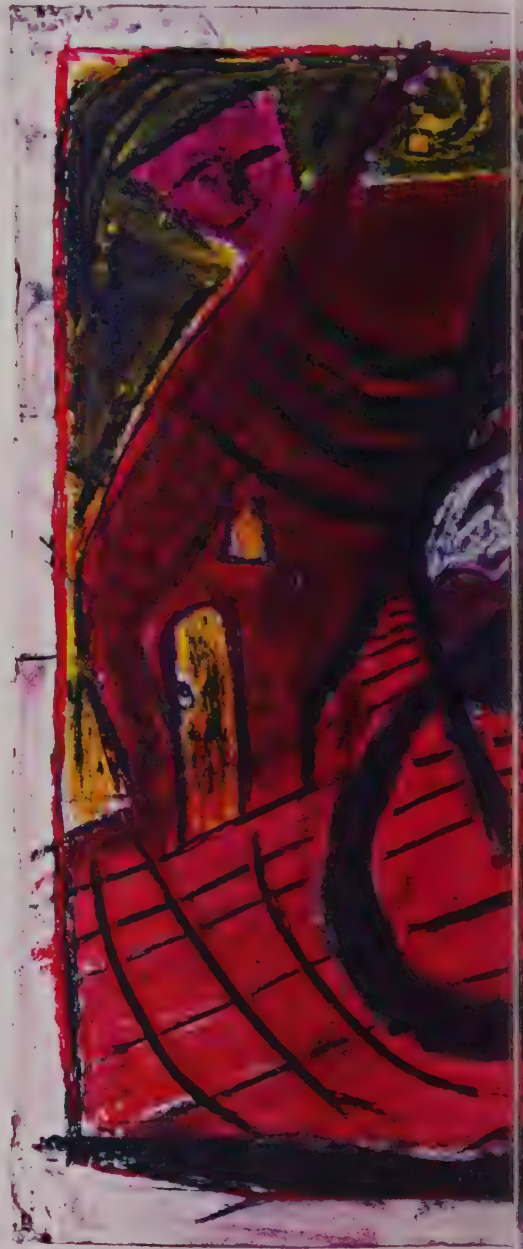
pened in various towns in 1938 when Nazis broke every glass and every widow belonging to Jews. I was staying with some people in Nuremberg for a few weeks and in their apartment there was not a cup or a saucer that was left whole.

I was 11 then. And that was the last time I went to school. I had learned to read, I had learned addition, subtraction and multiplication, fractions and percents. I had learned Hebrew quite well and had a fairly good knowledge of the bible but practically none of geography. And my mother decided I could not possibly sit at home doing nothing. So she approached a Jewish dressmaker she knew in Augsburg and said "teach her to sew and I'll pay," and so she taught me to sew.

Walter was 16 at the time and they no longer permitted him to go to school. So he went to work for my Uncle Moritz and Aunt Kathe who were still doing well at the time making plastic goods and selling them all over Europe. My mother had made sure that Walter learned shorthand and typing and so he

became their secretary. My mother also said to my aunt, "Kathe, you've got to teach him English and French". He went twice a week and after a year my mother said to Walter, 'now you teach your sister.' Of course that wasn't so easy and I cried because she gave me too much homework.

In 1934 there was a plebiscite in Germany. They had handed out



hundreds and hundreds of little pins on which it said 'Ja,' which meant vote yes, for Hitler. And everybody wore this little silver 'Ja.' And I remember grave looks. I remember whispered conversations



about what was in the newspapers. There were still newspapers that opposed Hitler. And I remember all the people saying 'The English won't let Hitler become chancellor. But then Hitler did become chancellor, and everyone knew it was going to be bad.

I remember being uneasy. You would walk along the street and some-where there would be painted a big hackenkreuz, a swastika, or people would be nervous. But they were nervous like Jews who

always feel under pressure, they were mistrustful of everyone. We didn't talk to anybody. If we traveled on the train, we were careful not to draw attention to ourselves except when it came to religious observances where we could not help being different. And there was never a time we didn't know it was dangerous, never. We knew it was dangerous, we didn't have to be told. We drank it in with our mother's milk—that's what really happened. And I remember when Hitler reoccupied the Saar. I can still hear the voice of our teacher, Mr. Rigg, who had never singled us out before but who now took pleasure in making us uncomfortable, saying "Mein Kinder, ich komme von grosten Gluck, die Saar ist Deutsch" ("My children, I am overjoyed to be able to tell you the Saar is German") and how it made us squirm.

And in '36 the Gestapo had come to the village and plastered the Jewish store windows with signs forbidding them to do business. And Hugo Deller tore the sign off his store. We were all inside in the downstairs living room of Aunt Betti, and the front windows looked directly out on to what was going on. The place was deserted. They dragged Hugo out to the smithy and they had him kneel down and they knocked him down and he was kneeling on his hands and knees like an animal. And there were two or three people who were beating up on him. And my father said, "My god, they're going to kill him." He was on his way to go out and everybody said, "if you go they'll kill you too. You must not go." I think there was such a deep-seated belief, I can't tell you, I mean every so often someone would say, "but we fought in the war." They couldn't believe that this would be anything that would have any permanence. It was simply more than their minds could deal with.

Then in 1938 a Jew in Paris assassinated a secretary at the German embassy. What followed was a sweeping roundup of Jewish men over 18. They took everyone. Before this, they had also been taking people on various charges. It could have been that we had a gun concealed or we had said something derogatory against somebody. They always had had some sort of reason for taking people, some semblance of legality. Obviously they weren't real but they still felt the need to have charges. This time they simply pulled in everybody.

I can't tell you how I heard it. But I remember going home and saying to my mother, "They say that they're taking everybody to



They dragged Hugo out to the smithy and they knocked him down

Dachau" and that was bad. When they took somebody to a local jail in Augsburg, that is when my father went into action to try to get them out. He would go and say, "this man isn't really a criminal, he pays his taxes, he's law abiding" and "he's going to leave the country anyway." But Dachau was different. You couldn't get people out of Dachau. And they rounded up all the men in our part of the country and took them to Dachau.

The local policeman came to our house to take Walter and my father. He came apologizing. He said, "I'm sorry." My mother had hidden Walter upstairs. She thought they might forget him. And they took everybody but they didn't take Walter. But the next day the policeman came back and said 'I'm sorry, somebody said we forgot to take Walter" and so they took Walter away too.

My mother was beside herself when they took Water. I was frightened but I still didn't really understand what was happening. My only experience had been Deller being beaten up but otherwise I had only heard other people telling stories. I couldn't imagine what it would be like. Because nobody had come out of Dachau. My mother, I'm sure, thought they weren't coming back

The village didn't protect them. They did not say "you can't take these people." I don't know if they could have. If there had not been one dissenting vote perhaps they could have. But there was no warning. They could not say "There's nobody here." And the other thing was there were always a few people who were happy with it. Mr. Rigg might not have sent them off to Dachau but he certainly was not going to stick his neck out and risk his career to protect them. And the people who arrested us weren't necessarily anti-Semites. They were just pro-Hitler which was not necessarily the same thing. For example, the synagogue was never destroyed. There was never a window broken, it was never defaced. The Torahs all had silver and gold trimmings, I suppose they did take that in the end. But they didn't take the Torahs.

So they came to the house and they left. My mother went into hysterics. She was lying on the couch weeping. No one knew how long they'd be gone or if they'd ever come back. There was no one left behind. Once they were gone, the Mayor, who lived next door and who had gone to school with my father said to the Gestapo



And they rounded up the men and took them to Dachau

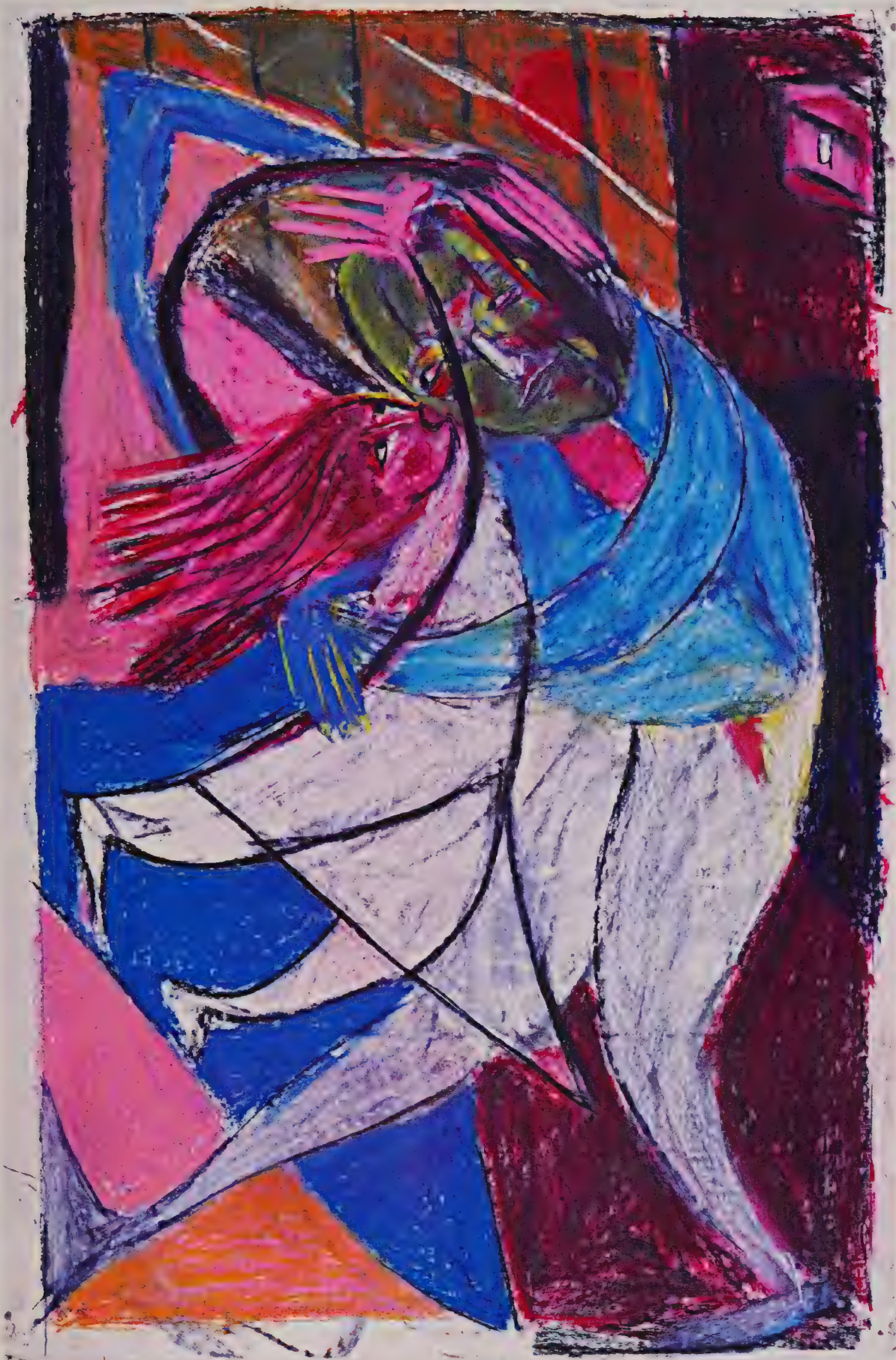
that the Jewish affairs in the village had to be settled and they couldn't do it without the President of the Jewish community, my father.

My father came home on a Friday afternoon. I was in Augsburg at my sewing place and Fraulein Kapp came in and said, "Annie there's somebody here to see you." And I waked into her living room and my father was there. I couldn't believe it. I threw myself at him. And she offered him some wine and cookies. My father never ate sweets, he hardly ever ate a desert, he just wasn't a sweets eater. But that afternoon, Fraulein Kapp had put out a little plate of cookies and some wine and in front of my eyes he ate every cookie on the plate. And I new something terrible had happened. He didn't look bad, he had only been there three weeks and he was never heavy but always wiry and he didn't look any thinner to me somehow or look abused or have any big bruises. There was nothing wrong with him that I could see. But there was this person who had never, in all the days that I had seen, eaten a cookie anywhere and he polished off whatever was on the plate. And it's funny but more than anything else, that told me something unspeakable had happened.

Anyway he fetched me and we went home together. And when I got home I remember telling my mother that he ate all the cookies. I said to my mother, "he ate all the cookies." I don't remember what dinner was like but I know he ate all the cake. My father never told of what happened in Dachau, not in my hearing, not one word. But after he came home that Friday evening, every Friday when he made kiddush he cried.

He was in Munich the next week again at the Gestapo headquarters trying to get the others released. What it took to do that was some-thing he never discussed. He always went alone. Eventually all the Jews from the village got out, whether it was because of his efforts I don't know.

It was well into December when Walter came home. He had dreadful, dreadful frostbite on his hands and feet and his hands were very infected, they never really healed. His fingers were like sausages. I've never seen anything like it. Red and thick, like literally, each finger was the size of a sausage - from just being frozen. Because they kept them standing still for hours on end in the yard. Well Dachau was not far from the mountains so you can figure mid-December, standing still for hours, all day at times. And they



I threw myself at him

just had thin pajamas with nothing underneath and of course no proper food. I don't know if they beat him. He did not say. He never talked about it. Some people were beaten. But he never told personal stories about Dachau, just what happened to them all in Dachau.

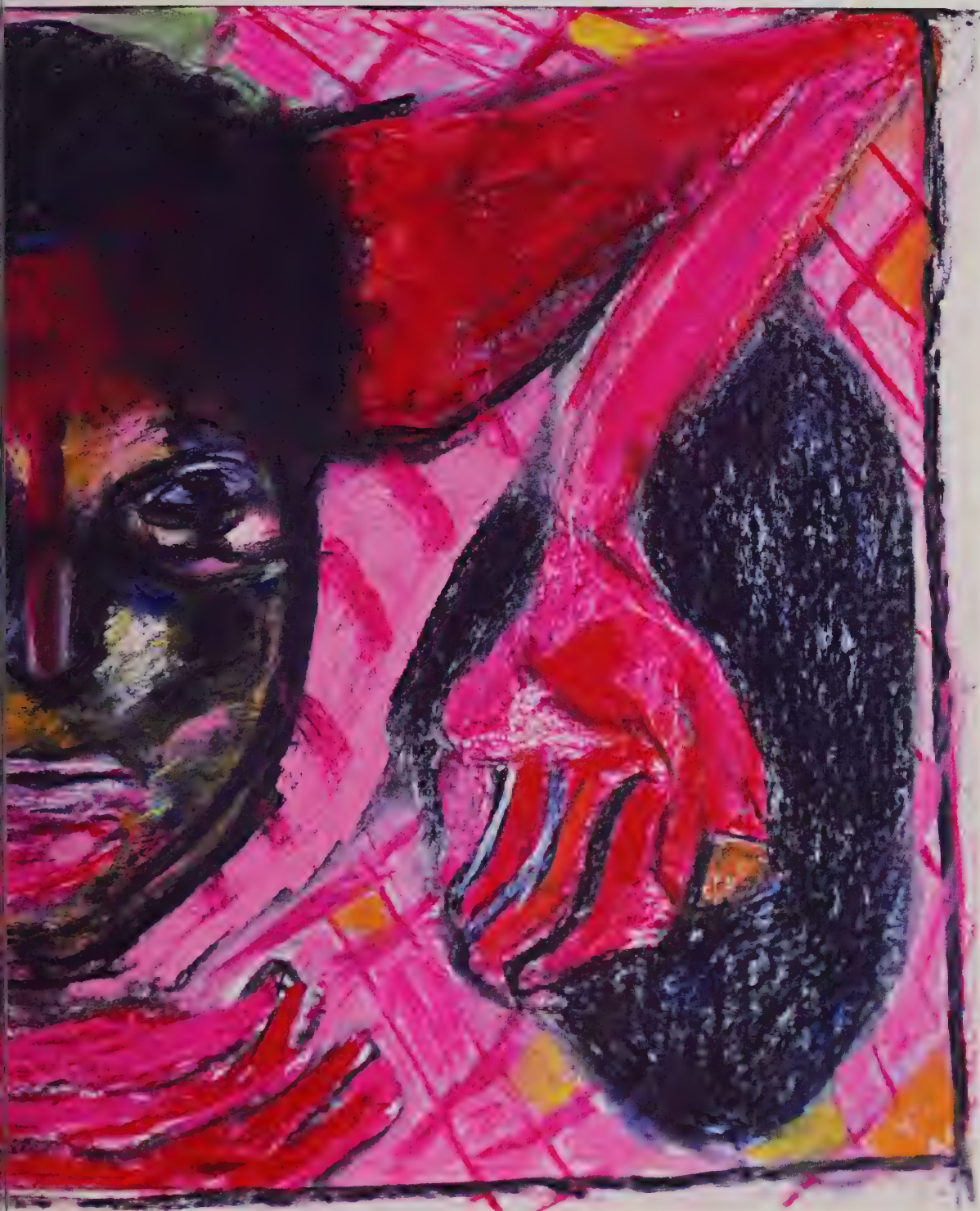
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answered back or got sassy, well then God help you.

None of us had ever heard of people treating other people in quite that manner before. I mean the very idea that you would starve

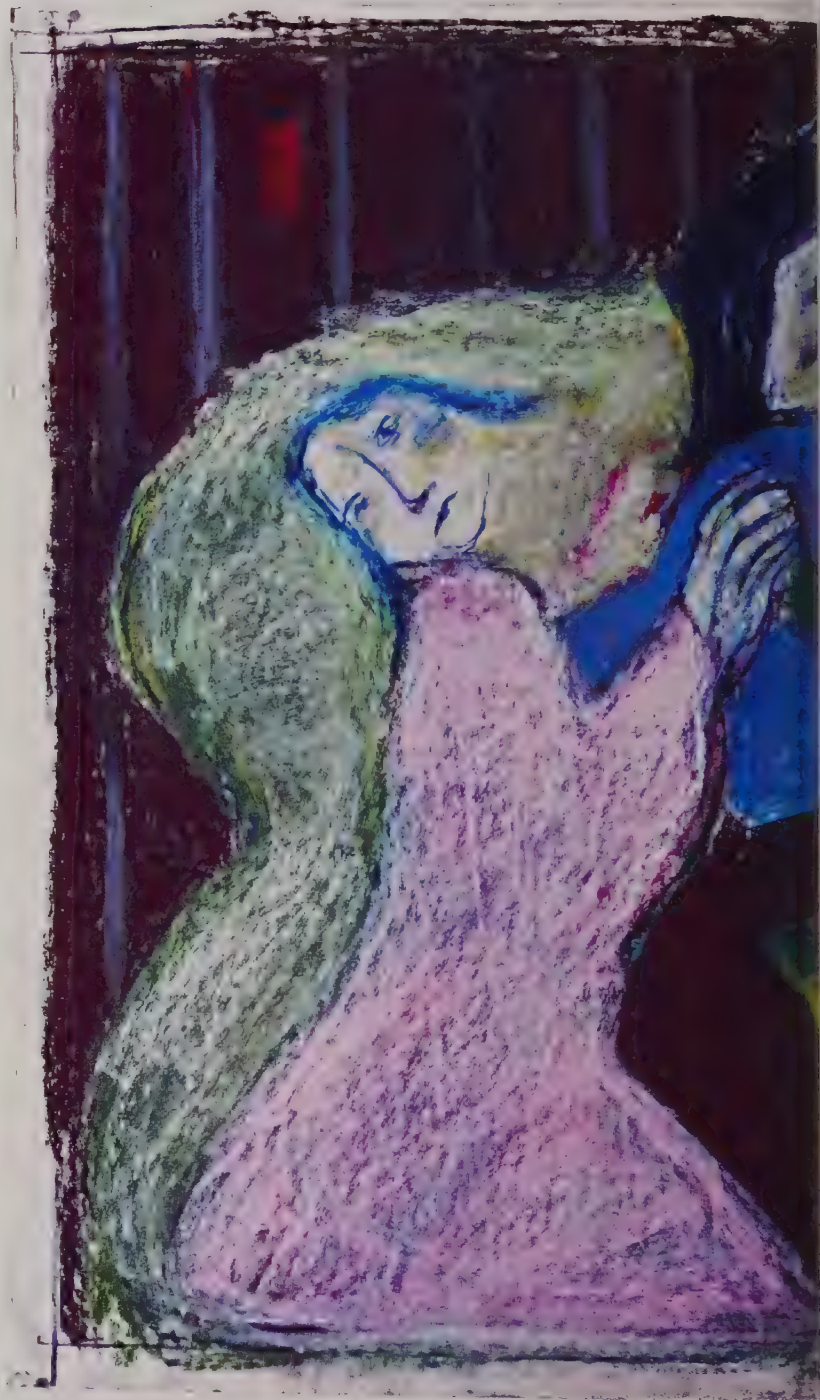
somebody was unheard of, that you wouldn't give them any food or that you would let them stand without clothes in zero weather for no reason at all or hitting them because somebody sneezed. And while that sounds com-paratively mild now when you think



His fingers were like sausages, red and thick

about what has happened since and how people have behaved since, at the time it was so horrible. And to see Water's hands with a those infections on his fingers....

By that time my father would have left. All the younger people had already gone by that time and they had gotten together an affidavit for my father to go to the United States as a repayment for services rendered to the community. But now it was too late. However the children could still get out on "children's transports". My mother set it up, she only cared that my brother and I should be safe. She didn't care about one other person immediately and made no efforts on anybody's behalf. What happened was a man in the village came to my brother Walter, who could write English, and said, "would you please write a letter to this lady in England whose address I'm giving you. Would you please ask her whether she could



do something for my two children." My mother said, "sure he'll write the letter, but you have to let him write on behalf of my children as well." So my brother wrote the letter to this woman and he wrote it on behalf of those two little girls and of cousin Rudi and me. And all four of us came out as a result of it. The whole thing took just a few months. But we didn't leave together. First

we got the news that they had a place for girls. Rudi followed.



The little necklace

In my luggage all I brought was a little bit of jewelry. It was hidden. One diamond ring, and the gold bracelet that I wear with the corral, some gold pieces, and a little necklace. My mother had rolled the diamond ring into a ball of wool, the coral bracelet was in the pocket of a shirt which had zippers in the pockets, the gold pieces were put into a nivea can, a flat round tin with silver

paper on top and she had pushed them into the cream and then put the silver paper back on. And she had taken the paper off a thread spool and pushed the little necklace in the hole in the spool and stuck the paper back on, "Now that's where it is," she said, "If you're hungry you go and you sell it." They never found anything. But I had ten marks in my pocket when I left for England, that's all I was allowed to take, and they took that away from me at the border.

It was a big adventure for a girl of fourteen, going to a foreign country. I was a venturesome child, it never occurred to me that I would never see my parents again. We never spoke about it though my mother may well have thought it. By then we knew about Dachau but nobody could have wildly assumed that Auschwitz would happen. How could we?

My father took me to Munich. My mother didn't come to the station with us, she stayed outside the house and waved goodbye. And in Munich I had a little navy coat and a hat with ribbons down the back, a red ribbon and a navy blue dress I had made myself with red buttons (I still have the buttons). And on the platform in Munich, my father checked me in with the leader of the transport. And he put his hands on my head and he cried and he kissed me good-bye and he put me on the train. He put me on the train and that was the last I ever saw him.

And there was a train full of children.



The train station



And there was a platform full of parents, all weeping.



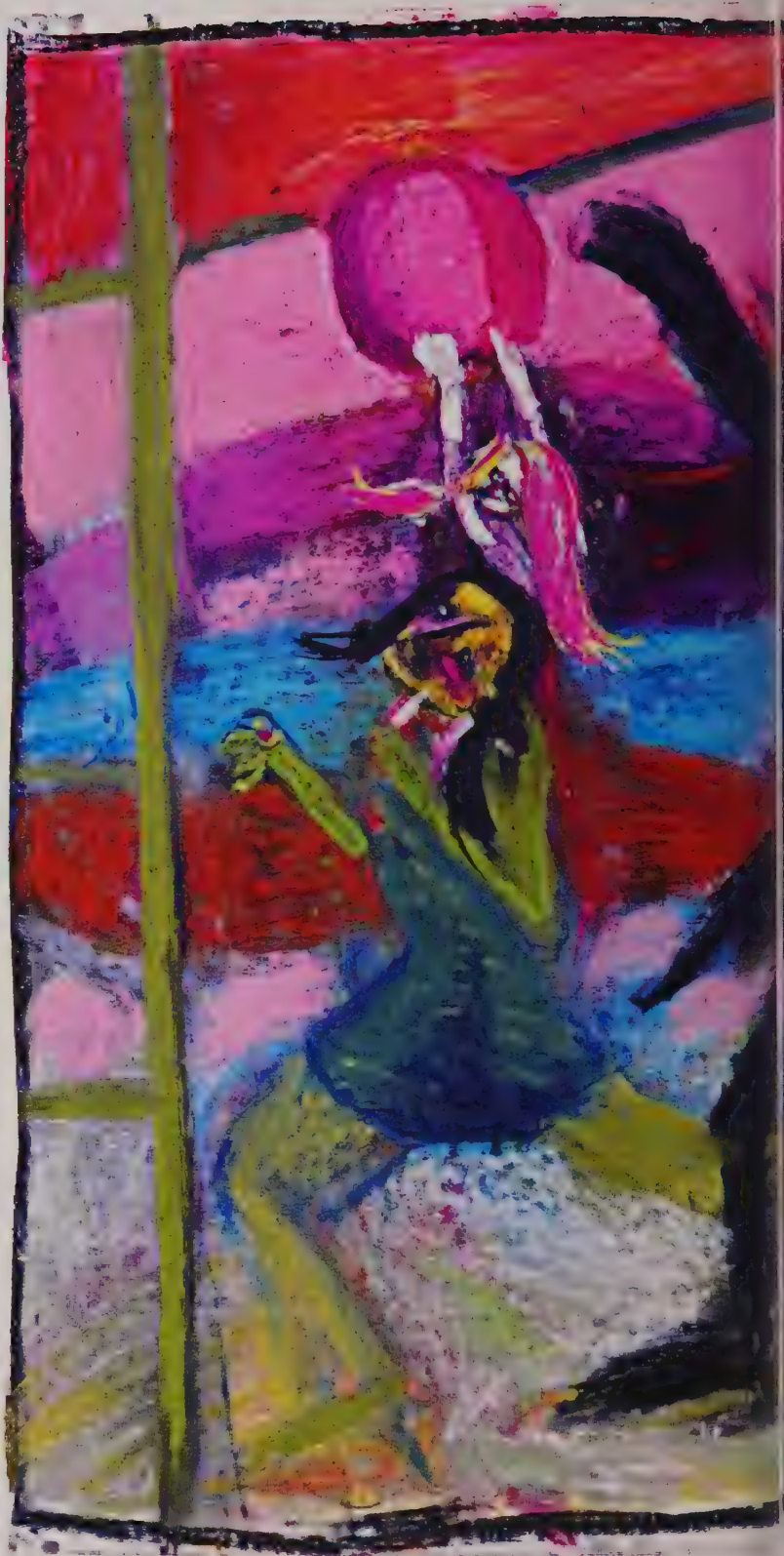
He put me on the train and that was the last I ever saw him

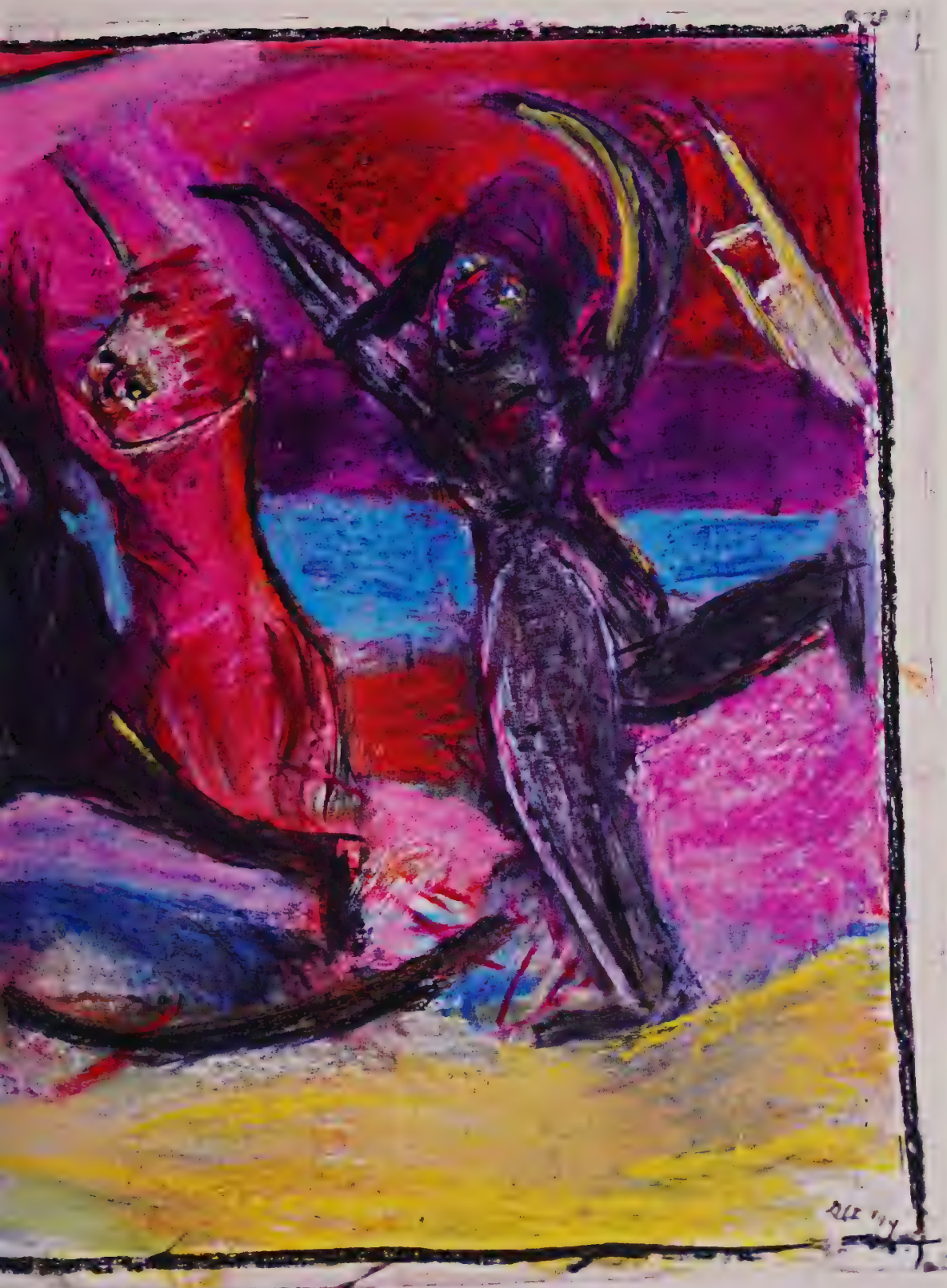
Afterwards

I don't remember my arrival in England. We were about twenty Jewish girls of all ages, from about four to fifteen, and there were eight of us who were thirteen and fourteen. We were well taken care of. I did not suffer any hardship. It was before the war, there were no shortages. We were a block from the beach and it was summer, and so we went to the beach everyday. We were still able to write to our parents all the time, and I was able to tell them that I had arrived. Mail was very fast, German mail was very efficient, and there was nothing to say that was forbidden.

There was a street photographer and for two pennies you could have your picture taken. And

we were constantly having our pictures taken and sending them home to our parents. We had free access to the pool because we were refugee children and we could go to the movies once a week, free, which was good for our English. It was a beautiful summer. There was no war yet





There was no war yet

Then the war was declared. But we all thought it was only going to last a few months and Germany was going to lose the war and then we could all go home again. "By Christmas, it's going to be over," everybody said. And we all believed it.

I don't know when we realized that it wasn't going to be that quick. We were all homesick but nobody talked about it to anyone else. And we were constantly told, everyday, how it would have been ungrateful to have felt that way. We were very stoic. We were told, everyday, how much we were in debt to the people who, out of the kindness of their hearts, were taking care of us and had saved us and were feeding us.

When I left home my mother said, "now you know how to sew, and if anybody asks you what you want to do you say you want to become a dressmaker." And so I found a job in the dressmaking department of a department store. And I went there every day on the rapid transit and went to work. I got five shillings a week pay and since I was the youngest I had to come in a half-hour earlier than everybody else, sweep out the workroom and do whatever else was necessary. At nine o'clock everybody else arrived and then I had to ask each girl in charge what they needed for the day. And then I had to go downstairs to the Notions Department and get all these things.

Now what you have to understand is that I had only been in England about six months. I wasn't speaking English that well and it was an agony to do that shopping and to make sure that the money was right. I had not been accustomed to deal in yards and inches, I had not been accustomed to deal in shillings and pence. It took forever. And then I had to make tea for the woman in charge. Then I had to clear the tea away when she was finished. By this time it was almost lunchtime. Well everybody bought lunch because there was a restaurant. And they would bring the lunch back to the staff dining room and the food always looked so good. And I brought with me a spam sandwich and tried not to look greedy.

I was strange and alone. I couldn't talk to anybody about anything. They didn't understand. How could they. What did they know about persecution. There I was 100 years old compared to an innocence which they couldn't even begin to comprehend.



And then came the law that all aliens over sixteen had to leave restricted districts in case of spy activity, and the coasts were obviously restricted districts. In fact we were all still German citizens - the fact that we were refugees didn't count. On the passports we were Germans rather than Jews.

Mrs. Siebert and Mrs. Urbach, the two ladies who took care of us, were obviously over sixteen and they had to leave. And it was obvious that in due course we would all turn sixteen because it was now self-evident that we were not going to join our parents in the near future. So they found us a house in Windermere, it was absolutely the most enchanting place in the world. Hills, I don't know how to describe it. There was one lake after another- wherever you looked- and a profusion of flowers all growing wild. There were meadows covered with daffodils and graveyards that in the Spring were a sea of bluebells. Everything was blue, covered with blossoms. And rhododendron growing in such profusion that you cannot begin to believe- beigy pink, dark reds, purples and lavenders.

Finally, when I turned sixteen. I went to join my brother Walter, in Cardiff, who had managed to come out of Germany under different circumstances. I found a job there with a woman named Elsie Atherton. She was a really weird lady. She never owned a ration book because she did not believe in rationing. She said there was enough food in the world to feed everybody, there was no need to ration food. And she lived on vegetables and potatoes.. And Elsie believed in holistic medicine at a time when nobody knew what that was. And she was an absolutely superb dressmaker. And everything truly important about dressmaking and fitting I learned from her.

A few years went by, I turned eighteen, and volunteered for the service. I wanted to go into the army but they wouldn't take me because I was a foreigner. So I went into the nursing service, at a TB hospital. Walter stayed in the factory. He had the typical Jewish European attitude - nobody goes into the army that doesn't have to. Not into anybody's army. Anyway, as a foreigner he couldn't join.

I went on duty at the TB ward at seven in the morning and got off at eight in the evening. I worked long hard hours in a hazardous position. TB is catching. I was paranoid for years after.

We corresponded with our parents for a long time. By the time the United States entered the war, I think, we must have heard that



they had begun to deport people to camps in Poland. We didn't really know what that meant. My ancestors, my great grandparents had come from Poland. When I heard they were deporting people to Poland I thought they were sending us back from where we came. We knew they didn't want Jews in Germany. We knew Jews weren't wanted anywhere. We thought it was just one more exodus. I don't think it really occurred to us that they intended to exterminate them. I don't think we thought until the end that we would never see our parents again.

At some point, quite late, we received a Red Cross letter that my father had written. It was heavily censored and he said, "It's Spring and the trees are breaking out, going green again" and it was clear that my mother was not with him. That's all. I knew the letter came from Poland. but I can't recall how I felt. Obviously I was suffering anxiety but there was a big war going on in Poland and Russia. They could just die in the context of war as much as anything else. Later I found out that of the hundreds of people who had been deported on my parents' transport, only two survived. That was all.

By the time all of that became a reality, we had been away from home for five or six years, we had done our parting and our grieving. There was now such a cultural gap between how I had been brought up and how I was living that I have no idea whether I could have gone back. It was a case of never being able to go home again. At least we, the older children were fortunate. We had something to miss. And all of us survived, a bit scarred but intact.

I never heard from my mother again. Once they were deported we only got the one letter from my father and that is the last we heard from anybody.

Later, when I got married, I saw the first newsreels on my honeymoon. When I saw the first one, survivors from the camps, I kept looking whether I saw any familiar faces. And of course I wouldn't have recognized anybody because everyone looked skeletal. And they showed the mass graves with all the bones. I never went again. And I never let myself specifically think about the people I knew. I always, in my head, to this day, include them with all the other people. I think about what happened to my parents on some level. It's always there and ever far removed from my consciousness. But I have never allowed myself to individualize them in the event. That would be intolerable.



Anita at eighteen

Anita Fellner, who makes her living as a dressmaker lives with her husband, Rudolph, in Pittsburgh PA. In 1984 she and her son Gene had a series of taped conversations from which Gene put together the manuscript which is this book. Says Anita about surviving the Holocaust, "To me, to survive never meant just to continue to exist or to continue to live. It always meant to absorb and integrate the experience, not even to make sense of it – how could it make sense – just to digest it, learn from it, and get on with my life a little wiser than I would have been."

Gene Fellner is an artist and writer living in Jersey City, NJ. He has received numerous grants and fellowships including being named "Distinguished Artist of New Jersey" by the New Jersey State Council of the Arts, in 1987, for his series about John Brown and slavery. The series of paintings and pastels that comprise "A Train Full Of Children," has toured nationally. In 1992, he edited "Life of An Anarchist: The Alexander Berkman Reader," published by 7 Stories Press in New York City. His recent booklet, "Andrés & Tony," is being distributed by Visual Aids in New York City. He is presently working on a series of paintings entitled "The Disappeared and The Rest Of Us."

